

# Jailer is fired after fellow officer Tasered

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**Jailer is fired after fellow officer Tasered**By Quintin Ellison



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A detention officer tasered a colleague at Jackson County Jail earlier this month and has been fired, Sheriff Chip Hall confirmed Monday.

Shawn Soltis lost his job July 6, public records show. He was a new hire, just six months on the job. Hall said Soltis was fooling around when he grabbed a Taser stun gun from a desk and shot a fellow officer in the leg. She wasn't injured, Hall said.

Tasers shoot a five-second burst of electricity. While law enforcement officers nationwide rely on stun guns for nonlethal use of force, Taser use isn't without risks. Amnesty International found more than 500 people died between 2001 and 2012 after being shocked.

Police officers are certified to use the equipment. Soltis hadn't received that training, Hall said.

The detention officer's Taser misuse comes as Jackson County Jail continued scrutiny following two inmate suicides and the arrest of the jail's nurse on unrelated charges.

Chuckie Moose hanged himself Nov. 21 in his cell using a sheet tied to his bunk. Steve Ross did exactly the same March 13.

In North Carolina, jailers are required to physically view inmates twice an hour. Ross was detoxing and should have been checked four times an hour. The Herald in March reported that Moose and Ross weren't checked as often as

required; an N.C. Department of Health and Human Services regulatory investigation confirmed that reporting, with inspectors finding county jailers failed to make mandatory visual checks.

On July 9, District Attorney Ashley Welch said she hasn't decided whether to file criminal charges in connection with the deaths of Moose and Ross. She couldn't be reached Monday (July 27). An automatic response to an email said the district attorney is out of her office this week. Welch previously described State Bureau of Investigation agents' report as "lengthy."

Unlike Soltis, the detention officers working at the time of the suicides remain county employees. The sheriff suspended two of the four for five days each.

Hall was chief deputy when he was elected sheriff on Nov. 4. His 17-year climb to the top post included a stint as jail captain.

He was sheriff when Ross died, but wasn't when Moose died, or when Jail Nurse Michelle Dillard helped host a now notorious Halloween party. In the aftermath, Dillard and then-Deputy Jimmy Henry, who attended the party, were charged with obstruction of justice.

Investigators say two 14-year-old girls were sexually assaulted, and numerous underage high school students were drinking alcohol.

Dillard's county contract was terminated five days later, on Oct. 30. Former Deputy Jimmy Henry was fired; or, in county parlance, "separated from employment." Cody Jenkins, 24, was charged with statutory rape and two counts of statutory sex offense. Austin Davis, 19, was charged with statutory sex offense. The district attorney said on July 9 there was no new information in these cases. None of the defendants have gone on trial.

Hall hired a new jail supervisor in late March. He said Capt. John Buchanan enjoys his complete confidence. Since taking charge, the former detective has spearheaded a review and rewrite of jail policy and implemented DHHS recommendations.

"He's making the progress I want to see," the sheriff said. "The Taser was an isolated incident. It happened. We addressed it."

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